



News

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CCFC Launches Unprecedented Statewide Education Campaign for Parents, Caregivers of Young Children

***Free Kit for New Parents, Multi-lingual Advertising Campaign
Promote Early Childhood Development and Remind Californians
"Your Choices Shape Their Chances"***

Los Angeles - The California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) today launched an unprecedented statewide campaign to educate parents and caregivers about the important role they play in the intellectual and emotional development of young children and to provide information about methods of nurturing and parenting that encourage positive early childhood development.

The new campaign is the first in the nation to combine a comprehensive parenting resource for *all* parents of newborns, called the *Kit for New Parents*, with a statewide multi-lingual advertising campaign. The ad campaign encourages parents and caregivers to "read, talk, and play" with young children even when they are infants.

"A child's brain develops most dramatically during the first three years of life, and what parents and caregivers do during those early years makes a profound difference for the rest of their children's lives," said Rob Reiner, chair of the CCFC. In 1998, Reiner authored Proposition 10, which created the CCFC and funded its activities with a 50 cent-per-pack tobacco tax.

Reiner launched the campaign at the Hope Street Family Resource Center in downtown Los Angeles, joined by Andy Garcia and Jamie Lee Curtis.

Governor Gray Davis, who appointed Reiner to chair the State Commission, praised the campaign and the CCFC's efforts on behalf of California's children. "Today, California is making history with the launch of the CCFC's *Kit for New Parents* and media campaign. Once again, our state is at the forefront of a public education campaign that will better the lives of California's children and families. When we invest in our kids, we invest in the future."

Available in English and Spanish, the *Kit for New Parents* contains six videos narrated by prominent child development experts and celebrities such as Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Dr. Antonia Novello, Le Var Burton, Jamie Lee Curtis, Gloria Estefan, Andy Garcia, Edward James Olmos, Phylicia Rashad, Rob Reiner, Cristina Saralegui and Maria Shriver. Topics include the importance of the early years, child care, safety, health and nutrition, discipline and early literacy. The videos provide important information on nurturing and parenting that encourage healthy development for young children from birth. The *Kit* also includes a series of parenting brochures, a baby book and a resource guide to connect parents with local services. The *Kit* will be made available to all parents of the nearly 500,000 babies born in California each year.

The *Kit for New Parents* is also available to California's parents through the CCFC's toll-free information lines, (800) KIDS-025 (English) or (800) 5-0-NIÑOS (Spanish).

The ad campaign includes television and outdoor ads (billboards) produced in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese. In addition to these languages, radio ads will be produced in Hmong and Lao, and newspaper ads will run in Cambodian, Thai and Tagalog. One set of ads reminds parents and caregivers of their important role in early childhood development, and provides specific suggestions for ways to incorporate reading, talking, and playing into a family's daily routine. A second group of ads describes how smoking by and around pregnant women increases the likelihood of babies being born premature or with serious health problems. Both sets of ads conclude with the reminder that "your choices shape their chances."

County Prop. 10 Children and Families Commissions have joined with CCFC to create the California Children and Families Partnership to launch this education campaign. County Commissions will lead distribution efforts for the *Kit for New Parents* at the local level, through partnerships with hospitals, home visitation programs and parenting classes.

"The County Children and Families Commissions are establishing local partnerships to be sure that the *Kits* will reach new and expecting parents through trusted sources and programs," said Dorinda Ohnstad, executive director of the Kings County CCFC and co-chair of the California Children and Families Association, an association of Prop. 10 County Commissions. "This program will be a key part of the County Commissions' efforts to connect parents with their local communities and services."

***Kit for New Parents* shows results**

The Center for Community Wellness at the University of California at Berkeley conducted a pilot test on the *Kit for New Parents* that proved so effective that the CCFC voted to expand distribution statewide.

During the pilot, 99 percent of mothers who received the *Kit* suggested that it be given to all parents. Nearly half of the mothers reported changing their behavior or the way they thought about parenting because of the *Kit*.

“In my 20 years of evaluating educational materials in this field, I have never seen a resource make such a strong impression on parents,” said Dr. Linda Neuhauser, principal investigator for the pilot evaluation. “The results of the pilot indicate that the *Kit for New Parents* will have a major impact on the way Californians raise their kids. Mothers and fathers found the *Kit* invaluable in making many important parenting decisions.”

Ad campaign based on research

The ad campaign was developed with the help of extensive surveys and focus groups of California parents of all income levels and major ethnicities. The research showed that many new parents – especially new immigrants – were unaware of how large a difference they can make in their children’s emotional and intellectual development, and that most welcome information and advice about early childhood issues.

The research also showed that about half of young children in California spend at least 15 hours per week in the care of someone other than a parent – often with grandparents. Because studies by other child development experts concluded that compared to parents, grandparents are far less knowledgeable about recent scientific findings about childhood brain development, the campaign will also include ads and messages aimed directly at these caregivers.

About the CCFC

The California Children and Families Commission was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs to promote early childhood development for expectant parents and children up to age five. Prop. 10 was designed to address the lack of public funding and support for early childhood development in the wake of a growing body of scientific evidence indicating that the emotional, physical, social and developmental environment to which children are exposed has a profound impact on their ability to reach their greatest potential in school and to become productive members of society.